



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A POST-IMPRESSIONISTIC VIEW OF BEETHOVEN

By T. CARL WHITMER

In the works of Michael Angelo the creative force seems to rumble.—RODIN.

PRELUDE

OF the manufacture of viewpoints there is no end. Of the construction of essays to hold such viewpoints there is no diminishing sign. The process, however, is certainly not altogether vanity. Shall we not serve up the head of John the Bach, or listen to the heart-beats of Louis van Beethoven or touch the hands of any genius who is such a real hero that he becomes man and dwells among us? Because, after all, he is of us—much more than we think.

A favorite treatment of my subject would be the careful labelling of all passages referred to. But in this case—and at this late day—let us dispense with these safety-first aids; especially as a personal and quite untechnically human viewpoint is held up for the contemplation of the reader.

The writer feels quite at liberty to project views without painful consciousness of the horrors of the illogical. It is delightful to contemplate the proposition that what is immediately illogical is so often ultimately important and in the highest sense distinctive.

A few weeks ago a morning paper issued this statement: "Miss Blank will sing songs by Schubert and *Brahma*!" Better said than intended. Every great writer seems to become deified in course of time. We associate him with a god in the most natural way—when we are not too near the man. But that has been the unfortunate element in the popular study of the masterworkers. Why not concede their manhood to be their godhood? Why not admit a real man with all his defects to the celebrated company of martyrs and say that a human composer is greater than a deified one? However, this is not exactly an essay. It is more like an after-dinner monologue—over the coffee, where logic fortunately hath not its dwelling.

My desire, above all things, is to present—at least, preserve—Beethoven as a thoroughgoing mortal and frequently an illogical and inconsistent quantity. Why divest a genius of his feet which tramp so solidly upon the earth? Permit him to walk with us a while in the cool of the day.

CONCERNING GENIUS

I like Emerson's idea of genius:

Genius is the activity which repairs the decay of things. Nature, through all her kingdoms, insures herself. She makes a man, and having brought him to a ripe age, she will no longer run the risk of losing this wonder at a blow, but she detaches from him a new self. So, when the soul of the poet has come to ripeness of thought, she detaches and sends away from it its poems and songs—a fearless, sleepless, deathless progeny; a fearless, vivacious offspring, clad with wings which carry them fast and far and infix them irrecoverably into the hearts of men.

It is stimulating to know that the things which are really yours go 'irrecoverably into the hearts of men.' That, indeed, is the great question: Is it *yours*? If so, it will live.

It was a great period for geniuses—the first half of the 19th century. Geniuses of the keyboard, fingerboard, throat and music paper. It was a period where Nature insured herself several times over. It was a time in which to be great meant such a continuity of elevated thought that to have such thought was to function nobly.

How much pride we assume over the seeming appreciation of these men. We strut around and forget that it has taken nearly a century of preparation by our musical ancestors to prepare us for this grasp of the great. We can and do lose sight of our own time in flapping our wings comfortably and lazily over an earlier time. But, at any rate, if we really grasp the manifold manifestations of Beethoven we deserve to flap with joy and live in peace.

Beethoven was not always expressive. Who is? In our frequent anxiety to prove too much we make genuflections before every measure. That is not worship; it is superstition. But it is certain that Beethoven is more really expressive a larger percentage of times than—well, any other writer up to 1830. The study of the now famous note-books tells the reason; although the average man has a hard time understanding why he should have had such wrestling with his thought. Isn't spontaneity—he is apt to say—a "heavenly inspiration"? Or, as I have elsewhere termed it, a "first oozing" of afflatus and something which must not be tampered with? (Since Beethoven's time we have had several men whose genius has raised the world above its ordinary level. These men developed relatively late in life and were also very restless about the garbing of their ideas.)

This view of Beethoven has in contemplation the theory that durable spontaneity is nearly always a perfected and worked-out suggestion. The other variety is convincing as a kind of extemporisation, but survives not in an age-long plan.

Certainly about the most desirable result of a life of strenuous endeavor is to be rated a modern by the next century. One of the chief deductions from a study of Ludwig the Great is that if you or I throw our trash into the waste-basket, posterity will not have it to do. The measure of a man is his own casting aside of the unworthy. The tares and the wheat grow side by side, and it is not even a genius who always knows which is which.

It is easy to understand the contemporary overestimation of Certain Well Knowns in every generation. It is the complete adaptation of their means to a comparatively usual method of thinking. That is, their thought is no higher nor deeper than the expression natural to their particular period. We have a love for technical perfection and where this is immediately apparent we applaud, forgetting that what is so easily evident may be due to the lack of thought depth, which posterity is quick to discover. This is the case as I see it with two or three of the modern writers. They need no praise of ours for making them a general success. They are with us, not ahead of us, so move in the limelight automatically. But really great souls do not rest content with the mere expression of their feelings or with the feelings peculiar to their period, but so constantly reach into the Great Depths that what we know as balance of technique and idea is never completely attained. Their line has never quite the perfection of their thought. That fortune is reserved for those who do *not* cry out in the anguish of their delivery.

SOME NATIONAL PHASES

In an editor's foot-notes to Beethoven's letters, there are these words: "What induced Beethoven to have, in a certain work, German words? It was because the censorship forbade Latin words from an ecclesiastical text to be printed on the handbill." It is curious how we are forced to be national, or at least to have the outward semblance of being so. And not the least interesting thing about this independent man was his recognition of outside reasons for acting in a certain fashion.

I have always been interested, too, in the difference in size between a country and its great men. As has been said, "When Germany was small it produced Bach, Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller, Schubert. When England was small—the size of Belgium—it had

its greatest literature.” A country does not need full development to create a genius. That is a theoretical mistake we are making in America: looking for our great Expressor only when everything is where you imagine the end of the Melting Pot period ought to be!

The following letter from Beethoven sounds suspiciously like some unfounded American complaints we have heard:

In Egmont indicate everywhere in the violin part where other instruments come in. This is necessary in a century in which we have no longer any conservatories, hence no more directors. There is no training whatever, but everything is left to chance.

We are always idealising the place and time of a great man. After this there may be possibilities of a Beethoven rising up within our midst!

Another national theory disturber is that Beethoven’s grandfather was born in Antwerp, in 1712, of an old Flemish family. So we have a German of close Flemish ancestry living most of his life in Austria. Tut, tut! There *is* hope for us.

An interesting bearing on evidences of the “universalism of nationalism” in music is the grasp, for example, of German music by foreigners. You will think of Hector Berlioz and his wonderful understanding of Beethoven. You will think of Joachim, the Hungarian, and so on in an astonishing degree. (Indeed, haven’t Beethoven’s best interpreters been those outside his own nation?)

Beethoven’s interest was in the personal, the subjective expression. I hold that that is the basis of the national. I hold that our Americanism, for example, is larger than the country. And that larger thing is the Higher Self. When we have that we have the national. The local issues are but suggestive factors and act as bases for impulses and inspiration.

Here are a few lines by Florence Wilkinson¹ entitled:

THE PROPHET

To speak one burning Word
Thou shalt be heard;
Yet that one Word a sting
Of suffering
And on thy lips a torch
To sear and scorch
Until thou dost set free
Its utmost plea.

The world it shall illumine,
Thyself consume!

¹ By permission from her book, “The Far Country.” (Doubleday and Page, publishers.)

This is an adequate expression of Beethoven's higher self. Of course, prophets are not comfortable people to live with, chiefly because of the natural inconveniences of the great.

It is quite markedly uncomfortable to have an ideal. It is a softer situation to have a family tree. But when you haven't the latter you have time to foster the former. However, we are talking about prophets and idealists generally. The idealist is a rare and expensive luxury. Life on the higher planes ever demands sacrifices quite unregistered in the dietary of the church almanac.

Also, such a walker on said planes is invariably unique in his relationships. Even those with himself are at times uncomfortable and peculiar, while those contracted with merchants and other materialists give the latter excellent digestion, if it be true that humor is an assimilator.

Beethoven's exterior difficulties were largely the result of his own Karma, as the Theosophists say. Do not let us pity the Great—even if we are ourselves the Great! Nearly all such lives are made up of disconcerting sequences from self-imposed first causes.

One of the disadvantages of greatness is to have such things served up. The publication of Beethoven's—and other people's—letters serves only to show that men are extremely mortal; and that, like other letter writers who are not conscious of a future audience, he is largely prosaic and given to remarking on ducats and soup. You recall the letters on soup? To quote the words of comment:

In Beethoven's housekeeping, soup played a very important rôle. One can indeed say that the tone-poet was a kind of oracle with regard to soup. If a soup had once been condemned by him, no appeal was possible; the soup simply remained bad. If Schindler had declared a bad soup good, after some time he would get a note to this effect: "I do not value your judgment about the soup in the least. It is bad."

BEETHOVEN'S HOLD ON THE OBJECTIVE

or

HOW A GOD PLACES HIS FOOT UPON THE EARTH

Those who believe that it makes no difference in one hundred years what we have as basis for actions should catch an occasional glimpse of small acts as well as great of a Superman. No study yields such extraordinary results as that of searching out the motives of such a man. The big efforts have a reaction, too, in the little efforts.

"In haste I only announce to you to take in place of the four horns—if the first two should be found too difficult in performance—

two violas." What! A famous colorist substituting violas for horns! A small man would not do such a thing.

"I am going at the invitation of His Majesty, etc., when I shall pass through Leipsic. In order that the journey may be the more brilliant for me, I beg you, if not too disadvantageous to you, not to make known any of my compositions before Easter." The great are *not* unconscious. Is this the genius with his head in the clouds? No, said the sparrow. It's a mortal like one on your street.

"Please do not forget to address me as Chief Capellmeister. I laugh at such things but there are Miserables who know how, after the manner of cooks, to serve up such things." And see the worldly wisdom in the following: "My compositions are bringing in a goodly sum. For every work I have six or seven publishers and, if I choose, even more. They do not bargain with me, I demand and they pay."

"In your reply you might fix prices and, as you are neither Jews nor Italians and I neither of the two, we shall no doubt come to an agreement."

"The concerto I value only at ten ducats, because, as I have already written, I do not give it out as one of my best." Which is a pleasant reflection on the actions of an idealist. It gives one a tingling sensation—this common bond of humanity, just as we say, "This brand of sardines is cheaper than the other."

"Best thanks to the editor of the 'Musikalische Zeitung' for his kindness in inserting so flattering a notice about my Oratorio, in which such big lies are told about the prices I charged, and in which I am treated so infamously."

"I offer you the following works for three hundred florins: (1) Two sets of variations (2) A quail song, (3) Three four-hand marches." The words of a wholesaler.

"I would give them to you for a fee of two thousand florins. I assure you on my honor that, with regard to certain works, such as for instance sonatas, I am a loser since I get almost sixty ducats for a single solo sonata. Pray do not think that I boast." Another instance of modernity. My piano dealer and my plumber use almost the same words.

"Beethoven makes no boasts. I cannot and will not accept a smaller fee; only upon the agreement made with me can you keep the manuscripts."

And what do we hear in the following? It is similar to a famous modern who composed and "handled" a famous opera: "You must take the Mass, otherwise I cannot give you the other works."

"By next post I send you all three works: the oratorio, opera, mass. I do not think you will complain of this amount (250 florins). I cannot for the moment find the letter in which Simrock was willing to give me one hundred florins for the Mass, and even here I could have gotten even higher terms from the Chemical Printing Works."

"My present position forces me again to bargain with you; hence I believe that you could probably send me two hundred and fifty florins for the three great works."

I insist all this is a symptom of Post-Impressionism. What respect the publishers must have had for such divine independence! Of course Beethoven was a bachelor. That makes a difference.

"Do you know that I have already become a member of the Society of Fine Arts and Sciences? So I have got a title. Ha! Ha!"

"I particularly want the three songs of Goethe and mine. Have them printed on fine paper." One likes to think of Beethoven as a lover of fine printing and excellent linen paper. The more you study Beethoven the more you find his readiness to grasp all interesting and profitable phases of life. Only it had to be permanent profit. Besides, the small factors of personal relations were quite worth keeping in mind.

While a friend of Beethoven must have had a very difficult position to fill, yet when he had gone, how they must have treasured his conversations as well as his letters. A conversation is as the night-blooming cereus. It is the quickly passing beauty of an inner life. It is the thing which brings our neighbors to our doors and keeps them entranced. The reproduction of it is difficult. (That is the difference between it and gossip.) It is having a perpetual Assumption. We can not see it as it was.

Only a superficial soul becomes discouraged when he bumps into the hard, ugly facts in a great man's life, when he has difficulty reconciling a great musical thought with a mean, low-down, brutish, bearish personal act. It is a great virtue in the world at large that people will remember the good in the life of a genius even if they have a tendency to recall the evil in the average man.

ABOUT METRONOMIC REMARKS

And what do you think of the following as another proof of Beethoven's human heart-beats? I quote literally from "Pulse and Rhythm" (a reprint from the "Popular Science Monthly"), by Mary Hallock:

Out of forty-three metronomic markings, taken straight through from the beginning of the first volume of the Beethoven Sonatas—the

four standard editions as a working basis—nineteen are set to a rhythm of seventy-two and seventy-six beats to a minute, a rate exactly that of the average normal, healthy, adult human pulse; a pulse given by the best authorities as lying between seventy and seventy-five pulsations in the same time. According to fuller statistics, the physical pulse, varied by the time of day and the effect of meals, ranges from a little below sixty to a little over eighty. Within this limit all the rhythmic markings of these sonatas lie.

You will probably recall that Beethoven one time pointed to his head and heart and said: "My nobility is *here* and *here*." Considering the "effect of meals," I am inclined to believe he occasionally pointed to another part of his anatomy!

THE POLICY OF DEDICATIONS

A disciple will always refer to a Master as "fervent." What else should a Master be? If he is not that, what is he? Of course you can be fervent in expression of opinion, fervent in declaiming the joys of the flowing bowl, letting fall fervent oaths, et cetera.

At present we have specialists in the dedicatory art, whose fluency in inscribing works to patrons real and fancied is eminently eminent. But no one can gaze on the numerous inscriptions of Beethoven without a fine, ultra-modern admiration for diplomatic talent. Let us, by all means, have all pieces inscribed to somebody. One is reasonably certain that *somebody* will sing your songs. At any rate we know Beethoven was a past master at dedications. The psychology of this is simple, but is little studied and seldom worded. We have seen pieces dedicated to the highborn and the low born. All men are supposed to enjoy the honor. We have known, however, where the patron was *not* sufficiently appreciative; or—well, any reason—and soon the piece had a different patron saint. For example, Beethoven seems to have intended the dedication of the Mass in C for Bettina von Arnim. But it was definitely assigned to Prince Kynsky, "the lady being now married"!

Imagine Beethoven weighing the relative value and advantage of an inscription to single or married females.

Indeed, patron saints are useful. Let us not begrudge a composer his joy in calling upon heaven for more friends to dedicate his "stuff" to. Let us fancy that Carl Czerny dedicated each exercise to a friend, and that each friend had a characteristic which was "taken off" by the type of digital exercise. I regret that was not Czerny's practice and that it is not popular to say of an exercise devoted, say, to the enlargement of the span: "To

Monsieur Pastrie Coucke in recognition of services rendered." Why not celebrate everybody? Down with partiality!

It is an interesting list of "dedicatees" which you will find in the Beethoven works. Read it. It reads like the patrons and patronesses of a charity ball given by the unruly classes. But they knew a real man on sight, did those nobles.

THE CUBISM OF LETTERS

A cubist might start a life of Beethoven in some such fashion as the following:

In the rhythm was the beginning. Liver trouble was the end. Vitality of superconsciousness was the reason so long will be his life. 1770 the year was when an unswaddled babe floated in. Swaddling is artificial. About Beethoven nothing but clothes was artificial. The primitive emotions with a super ultra development of a century-aheadness were the characteristics of his genius.

This would be clear compared with one of his letters. Here is one chosen from a number of choice examples:

"The lady can have a Sonata from me, and as regards æsthetics, I will in general follow her scheme—and without following—the keys—the price, let us say five ducats."

Beethoven was sometimes just Teutonically humorous, and at other times just cubistically so. Not the least pleasant sensation received from his notes and letters is the one of his impressionistic utterances. His very average language made him seek individuality of utterance in the form (or lack of it) his lines to friends, enemies and publishers show. Some one who understood little the weight of German humor said, "his humor seems to me the humor of adolescence."

THE INTELLECT OF MUSIC

Every thinker has been impressed with the elements which go to the delineation of emotions. One is always surprised at the division of art-life into emotion *and* thought, feeling *and* reason, and the almost constantly lost-sight-of æsthetic structures which, although usually considered as feeling, never for an instant lose either element. The emotions in artistic use are vaporised thought, as it were; thought assuming another appearance—a metamorphosis of the manner. Of course to anyone with either a practical grasp of composition technique or with the veriest spark of æsthetic insight, it is the tritest of remarks that every really

artistic product has quite as much thought as it has feeling; only it is thought in a guise unfamiliar to most minds; it is thought in the magically disappearing mantle of the old tales. It is only the superficially trained who refer to the arts as emotional, as the layman understands that term. Certainly, too, a product which takes a vital and thoroughly conscious mental force to build up at every point is scarcely devoid of the essentials of thought.

Are not the chapters on æsthetics in philosophical treatises amusing? The writers would have the world believe that intellectual life is concerned only with factors which are definitely articulate in the average man's consciousness. Their lack of understanding of the processes of musical thought prevents their grasping the intellectual action involved. They examine the symptoms only. With such lack of understanding of music their attitude is somewhat similar to someone hearing the sounds of an unknown foreign tongue, and because he could grasp nothing but the sensations of tone would decide the non-existence of thought.

When we shall arrive at that blessed day in which only musically trained experimental psychologists shall have any authority in defining limits of intellect we shall also be free from trash such as that about the "physical freakishness" by men like Dr. Sohn. You recall the words: "The musical head and face are of a primitive type, because"—and notice this—"musical genius is a reversion to the time when men communicated their ideas by means of more or less inarticulate sounds."

The bearing on the mighty intellect of Beethoven needs no explanation.

It is on a par with a remark made to me some years ago by a well-known sociologist as we passed through a gallery containing some glorious Japanese prints: "Ah! don't you think this liking for such things is distinctly *atavistic*?"

MYSTICISM

The "sensation" of later works was a kind of dissolved intellect.

Mysticism needs little defining. When applied to music it often means a reading into a given passage infinitely more than the notation shows, or the reading of orchestral color into "black and white" instruments. This tendency with Beethoven was much in evidence in his later works. Of course he was conscious of it. He coined explanatory sentences which would lead the player

into a convenient heaven of understanding. But with all that there yet remains the vision unrevealed. No composer who has the mystic quality—compare MacDowell—ever quite makes his vision precisely known to his generation. There is something hopeless in the task of inviting the world by words and phrases to walk with you through the Mystic Fields of musical thought.

I am proud of our high functioning art. It is this peering into the indefinite, the infinite and unknown which makes us see the unseen; which makes us believe that which to others is incredible.

Of course, mysticism is not confined to the work itself. This is common property. "Interpretation is half composition" said a great æsthetician. The measurement of form must always include the existence of tone play as heard, not simple rhythm and chord sequence as it strikes your eye. It is no wonder that it took centuries to develop a notation which would even reasonably express such spiritual essences. The more one studies history the more wonderful is the triumph of the suggestiveness of written music. (And as an aside I would remind the reader that the mystical imagination is the only kind which brings about the emancipation of an instrument.)

Beethoven was a reformer whose whole existence is a tangible evolution. We follow it from the defined (in a conventional sense) and the transparent to a poetical vagueness and an opaqueness—and then to the delight in the mystical (which is to those on the "astral" plane a type of the definite). Beethoven often seems like the marble woman of Rodin. She was "the emblem of human intelligence assailed by problems it cannot solve, haunted by an ideal it cannot realise, obsessed by the infinite which it can never grasp."

MODERN TEACHING IN BEETHOVEN

In a letter to Carl Czerny, High Exalted Exercise Breeder, Beethoven writes concerning his nephew:

Don't let him stop for the sake of small faults, but point them out to him when he has played the piece through. Although I have done little in the way of teaching, I have always adopted this plan; it soon forms musicians, which after all is one of the first aims of art.

This is excellent advice for those whose sole idea is to teach the value of a small unit and lose the ensemble of the piece.

Then, too, Beethoven's works as well as the writings of the great men generally are the best aids to the injured. There are too many exercises in the world. They are too much like patent medicines. Their vogue has too great credulity as a basis.

Chopin with his musical Etudes, Beethoven and the rest have made more thirty-two calibre musicians than the Czernys. All honor to Carl, the pedagogue, but sift with sense.

So far as Beethoven's own technic is concerned Cherubini said it was "rough." Cramer said "today it is spirited; tomorrow eccentric to indistinctness and often confused." He was largely self-taught. What! What! Had no method? How did he make his way?

BY-PRODUCTS OF COMPOSITION

Somewhere long ago I read of the attractive conceit of having a flute made into a walking stick. Which is like unto an umbrella that resembles a cane, and breaks up into particles and tumbles discreetly into a suitcase. This is economy, and thrifty nature rejoices therein.

Composers are also thrifty on occasion. To make use of all that comes to us. To use the waste and sell it. This is certainly modestly modern. Beethoven has seldom been studied for his business efficiency traits. When he said he was brain owner he was right. His foresight is commendable. Certain moderns are skillful in the handling of by-products. Such works usually are called sketches. That is, sketches which "will not grow up." The practice is undoubtedly legitimate and exceedingly interesting.

Another type of by-product is where a theme such as you will find in Bach's cantata, *The Lord is a Sun and Shield*, is used later in a Mass.

Do you think Beethoven is free from this tendency? Nature is economical even through its greatest souls. None are free from using the crumbs which fall from their own table.

Surely we meet many examples of what we sometimes suppose the "old Masters would nevah, nevah, do!" We have a chronic and altogether ineradicable feeling that these Masters were perfectly virtuous petrifications. In reality, the history of composers shows their willingness to emulate the miracle of the cruse of oil.

THE ENFORCING OF WILL

In a letter to the Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven says:

To this feast (benefit in which Fidelio is given) the Master, with all due respect, invites his noble pupil, and hopes, yes, I hope that Your Imperial Highness will graciously accept and by your presence glorify everything. It would be very nice if Your Imperial Highness would persuade the other Imperial Highnesses to attend this performance of my Opera.

This belongs to the same method of persuasion as dedications. Beethoven understood thoroughly the Fine and Painfully Gentle Art of Persuasion.

It is a valuable pastime to see men enforcing their will. Military methods do not always work, so that each man devises for himself some way to handle the public. So long as there is average sentiment in a composition it makes its way unhelped. But let the gods grow anxious to bend our purpose, and behold, we first compose a masterpiece, then buy its publication, then set to work to develop and mold public opinion. Alas, the labors of a composer are not finished when his work is done.

IS THIS THE TIME OF THE CROWD?

To have great poets we must have great audiences, too.—WHITMAN.

The aristocracy of Beethoven's intellect is gradually becoming democratised. Let us rejoice at the fact that he is in the victrola and player-piano. He never dreamed of such possibilities of "canning." But he unquestionably would have been willing to write a letter to the manufacturers of such refinements which would read something like this:

Honored Sir:

For one thousand dollars I shall be pleased to play you my Opus 111. In case you need my Sonata Pathetique or Moonlight Sonata—which is much more likely and likeable—I think I must ask—indeed, I am sure of it—ask ten thousand dollars, since the Noside Company is after it.

Yours,

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN, Mus. Doc.

Aeolian Building, New York.

It was an exciting bit of news, the first reading of Beethoven's letters, to find him so like the business men and prima donnas I had heard of. I know an excellent lady who was quite sincerely shocked at the shrewd wisdom of these letters. But I pointed out that only wisdom of that kind at that time (as well as this) could have wakened the world to the commercial value of Beethoven's music and music in general—no mean achievement in the year 1822.

Getting back to the Crowd. Did you ever wonder whether Beethoven had an "audience"?

An American poet, Ezra Pound, says:

Did Synge have an audience in his lifetime? He had a scant handful. Had the Saviour of the world a great audience? Did he work on the magazine public? Did not the disciples of Confucius beg

him to do something popular? Have we not his imperturbable answer? "So you wish me to become famous—shall I take up archery or charioteering?" It is true that the great artist has in the end, always, his audience, for the Lord of the universe sends into this world in each generation a few intelligent spirits, and these ultimately manage the rest. But this rest—this rabble, this multitude—does not create the great artist.

While this rings true of Beethoven, I think it the wonder of the period that he could assemble any kind of a "crowd." But this may not have been his music exclusively. A man like Beethoven has always a fascination apart from his message. (We surely know men with a message but no fascination.) He certainly got together a following for some reason. Of course he had the constant help of the Archduke of Austria, Prince Lobkowitz, Prince Lichnowsky, Prince Kynsky and many others. It must be remembered that from 1800 on his situation in the world was secure; and that means much, considering certain porcupinal qualities which our hero possessed.

Part of his "audience" must have been collected because of his astonishing faith in himself. You recall the Arabian proverb? It goes like this: "He who knows and knows he knows—he is wise, follow him." And they followed.

THE CRAFT OF THE MASTER

While others walked in formulas and hearsays, contented enough to dwell there, this man (Mahomet) could not screen himself in formulas; he was alone with his own soul and the reality of things.—CARLYLE.

The craft—yes, there's the rub with the average writer. With such average composer there is no adjustment of skill and inspiration. There is no writer of equal interest with Beethoven in the matter of developing craft. The "oozings of the first inspirations" are not the permanent elevated expressions of one's soul. It is an easy soul which simply leaks. Beethoven's soul writhed in the agony of its deliverance.

Now, craft may be learned in the Cherubini way or the Beethoven way. Why not learn it in the Beethoven fashion? It makes all vital expression worth while as a decider of the form it shall take. What a wrench it always has been to recognise the authority of the thought over an established form. The rapidity with which an encasement of tone—the form—becomes sacred is almost beyond comprehension. Daily life is filled with examples of our being torn with the New one day and then swearing by it the next. Beethoven was careless not of his present, but of his temporary present. The eternally fit was his theme, no matter what the

structure he erected turned out to be. In music, form and the idea are frequently interchangeable terms; or rather, have the quality of being inseparable. Beethoven thought of them as water, ice and steam, each with forms growing out of their tempered conditions. The "temperature" of some of his ideas caused them to become conventionalised. That of others forced them to run into each other or to escape in the rarefied atmosphere of an ethereal group of variations (as in the last sonata).

EXPERIMENTATION

As we are studying craft we proceed further into the secret of Beethoven's greatness.

We are familiar with his extensive and marvellously comprehensive gamut of moods and range of thought. We are frequently told that his emotional "urge and splurge" are always controlled. That is, his emotions never are separated from their pyx, so to speak.

We know that his universal breadth was secured through deepening of the personal experiences. We know that this same personal quality has ennobled his passage work and, indeed, all such work as has become with others mere factors of sensation.

Perhaps it is not so frequently trumpeted that the attitude of Beethoven was essentially the attitude of the man in the laboratory. The word "experiment" has had for composers entirely too modest and self-repressive a sound. Nothing short of "create" would do. The smaller souls announce, 'I am a composer.' The larger ones compare themselves—when it is not indiscreet!—with an Unattainable Perfection and say "I am trying, I am working, I am experimenting."

To secure continuity of movements, to create an organic something out of strongly contrasted portions; to make blue moods harmonise with scarlet ones; to make variations develop rather than "variate"; to make the continuity of movements an extension of thought within one movement; to broaden the unit. Such was a part of the Plan.

One of his experiments was along the line of the exhaustion of the medium. What that signifies is likely well known. It has its most palpable evidence in program music, no matter what degree. Some readers may recall the following words along this line—only concerning ultra modern work—which are in my "Considerations on Music."

"The program music phase of musical history probably will be pointed out by the historians of the future as a transition phase, only of extraordinary proportions and duration; a period in which there was desire to express more than the medium seemed to permit; an age in which there was a squeezing out of all the possibilities of an instrument, i. e., compelling it to express musical, literary, plastic and color characteristics of every possible variety and intensity. Then—they will add—came a reaction where the public and private tonal appetite being satiated, all of this pseudo-literary and pseudo-painting speech came into the musical language as a vital and unconscious part of it. Following which broadening of technic, came the step higher into the once more æsthetically pure and legitimate realm of absolute music."

That is what I mean in a somewhat more limited sense with Beethoven's exhaustion of the medium. Of course it is not necessary to open up the question of titles in themselves. Titles focus attention and create a singleness of mood, due to a uniform belief. With Beethoven his most significant "exhaustion" is not in his "programs" but when he reaches out after the metaphysical.

TIME-MARKING SYSTEM

Our attention has often been called to the incompleteness of our notation, in spite of the centuries of labor put upon it. Particularly weak is it in the denotement of absolute values within the measure.

The composer molds and models quite as cunningly, quite as accurately as the architect constructs his plans. The composer's plans should be no more misunderstood than those reproduced on the blue-print.

Several centuries of usage by the best as well as the worst composers have had a hand in the conventionalising of certain musical symbols, signs and signals. It is hard to adapt ourselves to the new, even if better, and so we go on and on and on using the same symbols, the same signs.¹

Beethoven's ultra modernism is interestingly shown in his attempts to handle minute distinctions in metres and rhythms of large and small kind. No one can pick up his works without feeling the will to extend the boundaries of the expressive metric factors. The last sonata is visibly so handled. Indeed, plasticity cannot be secured except through just such experiments as Beethoven conducted.

¹ Reader, consult *Music* (Chicago) for June, 1900.

I would point out the difference between the notation of intricate rhythms of a mechanical nature and psychic rhythms. Our system accounts for mechanical rather than for spiritual suggestions.

Another always interesting result of experimentation is the extension of the vocabulary.

Our present extension of tone colors is no more interesting, though seemingly more radical, than the Beethoven extension. Can you not see the nerves of a tight-wig (this is "early" for tight-wad!) jarred by the appearing ninths in the slow movement of the—I almost said which Sonata!—and the sonorous newnesses of that—oh, well, Opus 106.

To extend the range of tone colors is a vital part of any modernity. And the resultant cacophony—that is only relative to the mental point of view, the nerve experiences and the quality of the idea expressed thereby.

To make a lengthy story short, the result of all these experiments was—and is—to create a new way for handling an elemental passion, and to make possible expression which was deemed heretofore out of the range of music and painting and poetry. That is, new beauty, sooner or later recognised as such.

The results of all real experimentalism are an assimilated summary of the Past plus the Present and Future. All the earnest post-impressionists have respected the past. The modern man uses the past but never stops with the past. I hold that the most modern men reverence the past more highly than the conservatives because they—*make it germinate*. The ultra-conservatives would bring the era to a close.

Beethoven's reverence for Bach and others who preceded him is known. And in that charming letter about assisting Bach's daughter what genuine appreciation of her great father!

In reality the story of great men shows their utilisation of what men bequeathed them in so far as it suited their individual needs. To study a fugue, for example, from a text-book by a smaller man is to get several surprises from the elasticity shown by Bach and the electricity shown by Beethoven. In a letter to Carl Holz, the second violin in his quartet, Beethoven says that it is "no great feat to write a fugue; I wrote dozens of them in my student days. But imagination also asserts her claims and nowadays another, a genuine poetic element must be blended with the antique form."

Our great men are the free of soul, a freedom based upon highly trained minds working for highly evolved natures. You recall that definition of genius as the mind and the emotions

working in absolute synchronism, but in a give-and-take way that men like Cherubini could never understand.

BEAUTY

And Beethoven's idea of beauty? Do you recall George Moore's idea of what was beautiful? He says that two thirds of (human) beauty is illumination of matter by the intelligence. But one third is proportion and delicacy of line.

Beethoven reconstructed for his time and for us the idea of beauty in music. Beauty is that which is the most *expressive* embodiment of the inner life. The inner life is varied. The inner life is turbulent as well as smooth, "spikey" as well as velvety, wild as tame, rough as polished, vulgar as well as refined, noisy as well as purringly silent.

Those composers noted for "proportion and delicacy of line" are the smaller souls among the great. Beethoven mixed life with his art, life of a most comprehensive inner variety.

FORM

In short, the purest masterpieces are those in which one finds no inexpressive waste of forms, lines and colors; but where all expresses thought and soul.

—RODIN.

Rodin also says in the same place: "What right have they to forbid me to add meaning to form?"

Quite the most wonderful vehicle of thought is musical form. And is it not interesting that after musicians have taken centuries to develop tangible forms, a great independent lion should make form a *real* vehicle for thought? Yes, much more. Make it actually the thought. Form at its finest with Beethoven is not always a mold but the molten thought itself. That is his transcendent quality. No other man has achieved such a technical miracle as this. It is a molten image keeping its shape without a visible mold. Beethoven is as elastic in his later work as our most modern of the moderns. Calling a thing a Tone Poem now is easy as compared with making the first Tone Poem and calling it a Sonata. When a form overflows: then, too, we have a wonder!

A CODA

No one has stood on the edge of life without wondering how it felt to be inside. When once within, the highly tensioned have a lifelong problem in securing such a hold on the objective as to

set in motion properly the subjective. Those who work with tone have difficulty keeping their consciousness of world-contact from dulling their tools, because at the same time as they compose they also must cause by personal or impersonal propaganda the more slowly vibrationed to understand the functions of their work.

If we remember that Art is a well-proportioned imaginative synthesis of personal views of seeming facts and moods and also recall that these personal views are broadly racial after all, we must think of Beethoven as one of those great "producers" who is objectively subjective, to put it briefly. Beethoven induces us to restudy him because he enlarges a personal factor until it is seen and heard and felt by the life of the world—where, after all, he found it.

Klinger's multi-colored statue of Beethoven contains a noble synthesis of powers, intentions, achievements. It shows the reality of the creator, even the endeavor which must be so radiantly selfish as to serve mankind in the ages more efficiently. It shows the Beethoven who had the eternal qualities of the poetical which are so tangible, the poetry which can say:

*I am the reality of things that seem;
The great transmuter, melting loss to gain,
Languor to love, and fining joy from pain.
I am the waking who am called the dream;
I am the sun, all light reflects my gleam;
I am the altar-fire within the fane;
I am the force of the refreshing rain;
I am the sea to which flows every stream.
I am the utmost height there is to climb;
I am the truth, mirrored in fancy's glass;
I am stability, all else will pass;
I am eternity, encircling time;
Kill me, none may; conquer me, nothing can—
I am God's soul, fused in the soul of man.*

(ELLA HEATH)